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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between self concept and marital adjustment for married students and their spouses in a commuter college setting. The sample consisted of a random selection of 50 "both spouses commuting" couples, 50 "husband only commuting" couples, and 50 "wife only commuting" couples (300 subjects). A significant relationship between self concept and marital adjustment was found for the total sample of married commuter college students. There was a significant relationship for males in marriages where both spouses were commuting to college, and where the wife only was commuting. Females in "wife only commuting" marriages were also found to have a significant relationship between self concept and marital adjustment. The major implications of the study were that apparently self concept and marital adjustment do have a bearing on one another, and that student personnel staff members need to offer marital counseling to couples who have an arrangement of wife in college and husband working. (Author)

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The Relationship Between Self Concept and Marital Adjustment for Commuter College Students

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Abstract

An investigation was made of the relationship between self concept and adjustement for commuter college students. Instruments used were the Tennessee Self Concept Scale and Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test. It was found that there was a significant relationship between self concept and marital adjustment.

The Relationship Between Self Concept and Marital Adjustment for Commuter College Students

Introduction

Numerous writers have discussed the importance of the self concept in human adjustment. Wylie (1974) cited nineteen major works that accord a central role to the self concept.

James (1950) proposed that self concept consisted of three parts: (a) a constituency composed of material self, social self, spiritual self, and pure ego; (b) self feelings, which are the feelings and emotions aroused by the constituency; and (c) the actions prompted by the feelings and emotions.

In more recent years writers such as Combs and Snygg (1959), Fitts (1973), Maslow (1954), and Rogers (1951) have focused on the self concept as a cognitive-motivational system which can predict and maintain a variety of behaviors (Deese, 1971).

The importance attributed to positive self concept in individual human adjustment raises the question of its influence in marital adjustment. The present study considered self concept as a factor in the marital adjustment of commuter college students.

Aller (1962) found that self concept played a significant role in marital adjustment for noncommuter college students. This relationship was particularly strong in student marriages where too great a capacity for independent thinking, dominance, academic excellence, aggression, and

self-centeredness in wives threatened the husband's self concept. Using a non-college population, McC[illegible]n (1973) found a positive relationship between self concept and marital adjustment.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between self concept and marital adjustment for married students and their spouses in a commuter college setting. Three marital conditions were considered: "both spouses commuting," "husband only commuting," and "wife only commuting." In each condition both spouses were considered separately, making a total of six combinations to compare.

Method

The research was conducted in the Fall of 1974 at a community-oriented commuter college located in a Southeastern city of approximately 270,000 people. At the time of the research the student body consisted of approximately 4,800 undergraduate and 625 graduate students. With the exception of a small number of athletes who were living in an athletic dormitory, all of the students were commuting to the college, and the majority held full or part-time jobs in the community.

The sample was selected from the Fall quarter registration records and consisted of the total married student population of 2,242 students attending the college at that time. A random selection of 50 "both spouses commuting" couples, 50 "husband only commuting" couples, and 50 "wife only commuting" couples (300 subjects) was used.

Instruments used in the study were a questionnaire to gain demographic date, the Tennessee Self Concept Scale (TSCS) (Fitts, 1964) using the Total Positive Score to assess the married students' global self concept, and the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test (LWMAT) (Locke & Wallace, 1959) to measure marital adjustment. Higher scores on the LWMAT indicate a more satisfactory marital adjustment. The instruments were mailed to the 150 couples along with a cover letter introducing the study and providing instructions. Also included was a letter from the director of student services at the college giving his authorization for the study and assuring the couples of its confidentiality. A total of 130 usable responses were received and included in the study.

Results

Pearson Product-Moment correlations were used to determine the relationship between TSCS Total Positive scores and LWMAT Total Adjustment scores for the total sample of married commuter college students and for each of the six groups. The data are reported in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

A significant relationship between TSCS Total Positive scores and LWMAT Total Adjustment scores for the total sample of married commuter college students was found, r (128) = .40, p < .001.

For the six married student groups, the findings indicated a significant relationship for "both spouses commuting" males, r (23) = .45, p .05, "wife only commuting" males, r (15) = .75, p .001, and "wife only commuting" females, r (18) = .51, p .05.

Discussion

The findings do not address the marriage relationship beyond the fact that a positive correlation did exist between the TSCS and LWMAT for both husbands and wives. However in marriages where the wife was in college there was apparently stronger evidence of a relationship between self concept and marital adjustment. This was particularly so for males in marriages where only the wife was attending college (r-.75).

The lack of cause and effect relationship of correltation reporting is not the crucial issue, but a recognition that apparently self concept and marriage adjustment do have a bearing on one another seems important to point out. Possible feelings of inadequacy on the part of the husband, of his feeling neglected by his wife in marriage responsibilities and other tension producing experiences for the couple in college indicate a need for recognition of a relationship between self concept and marriage adjustment.

It would seem appropriate for the student personnel staff member to offer marital counseling for couples who may have an arrangement of wife in college and husband working. Such counseling might be of a preventive nature and effectively dealt with in a group situation. The apparent need for this

type of counseling by married student populations indicates a need for staff members in college counseling centers to either have or gain expertise in marital counseling proceedures.

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Table 1

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations Between TSCS Total Positive Scores and LWMAT Total Adjustment Scores

Group	TSCS[a] Total P		LWMAT[b] Total Adjustment		TSCS-LWMAT
	n	M	SD	M	SD	r
All Subjects	130	351.02	30.62	112.72	27.08	.40**
Males						
Both spouses commuting	25	348.44	31.16	112.48	23.82	.45**
Husband only commuting	21	350.52	39.33	113.10	25.51	.31
Wife only Commuting	17	348.59	28.55	111.47	27.49	.75**
Females						
Both spouses commuting	27	351.96	23.51	110.41	30.63	.25
Husband only commuting	20	360.20	30.09	123.10	22.89	.15
Wife only commuting	20	346.40	32.19	106.45	31.15	.51*

[a] Standardization group $M = 345.57$, $SD = 30.70$

[b] Critical adjustment score = 100

* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$